

Selection approved	April 29, 2011
Contract negotiated/executed	May 2-13, 2011
Contract performance begins	September 1, 2011
<u>Disclaimer: Dates are subject to change at the PUCT's discretion</u>	

SECTION 5 – COMPENSATION

The TRS provider will be compensated at the rate and under the terms and conditions established in the contract with the PUCT based on the price proposal accepted by the agency. Invoicing and payment will be made monthly unless otherwise approved in writing by the PUCT

SECTION 6 – QUESTIONS

The PUCT will accept questions and requests for clarification only if they are sent in writing (by mail, fax, or e-mail) to the attention of the personnel below. Inquiries and comments must include RFP number **473-11-00193**.

Direct general questions about the RFP to:
Eileen Alter
Relay Texas Administrator
Public Utility Commission of Texas
P.O. Box 13326
Austin, TX 78711-3326
Fax: (512) 936-7428
eileen.alter@puc.state.tx.us

Legal questions may be directed to:
Leticia E. Flores
Director of General Law
Public Utility Commission of Texas
P.O. Box 13326
Austin, TX 78711-3326
Fax: (512) 936-7058
leticia.flores@puc.state.tx.us

Please Note: Ms. Alter and Ms. Flores are the only permitted points of contact. Contact or attempted contact with other PUCT employees, including Commissioners and their staffs, may result in a proposer's immediate disqualification.

The PUCT will post additional information, responses to written questions, RFP modifications, and addenda on the PUCT website at: www.puc.state.tx.us/about/procurement/index.cfm. Proposers should check the website often to ensure they have the most current information.

SECTION 7 – PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposers must file their sealed proposals in Project No. **39135** in PUCT Central Records before 4:00 p.m. CDT on April 8, 2011. Proposals submitted in response to this request must meet the following conditions to be considered for selection. Fax or email proposals will not be accepted under any circumstances.

The PUCT's Central Records Division is open to the public for filing Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CDT, excluding holidays. Central Records is also closed every Friday from 12 noon to 1 p.m. unless there is an Open Meeting of the Commission that day. Proposals will not be considered if received in the Central Records Division after 4.00 p.m. CDT on the closing date.

Mailing Address

Central Records Division
Project No. **39135**
Public Utility Commission of Texas
P.O. Box 13326
Austin, TX 78711-3326

Hand Delivery Address

Public Utility Commission of Texas
Central Records
8th Floor
1701 N. Congress
Austin, TX 78701

Please Note: The PUCT WILL NOT accept a U.S. Postal Service postmark, round validation stamp, mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the U.S. Postal Service, a dated shipping label, invoice or receipt from a commercial carrier, or any other documentation as proof of timely submission of any proposal. The PUCT assumes no responsibility, under any circumstances, for the receipt of a proposal after the deadline time and date established in this RFP.

The PUCT will accept ONLY the time/date stamp of its Central Records Division as evidence of timely submission.

Number and Appearance

The proposal submission must include an information sheet that clearly states the name of the proposer; the name, address, and telephone number of the proposer's point of contact, project number; and the RFP title and number. The information sheet is the first page before the sealed proposal submission. Upon receipt of proposals, the PUCT will file the information sheets of submitted proposals in Project No. **39135**. All parts of the proposal after the information sheet must be submitted in an envelope or other sealed container that is marked with the proposer's name and "Project No. **39135**: CONFIDENTIAL."

Proposers must submit one (1) clearly marked "Original" of their proposal response with original signature and five (5) identical copies of their proposal. Proposers must also submit one (1) electronic copy of the complete RFP response on a compact disk or memory stick (flash drive) in Microsoft Word.

Proposals must be written only on 8 ½" x 11" white paper using double or 1.5 spacing, and 12-point or larger Times New Roman font.

Proposals must include all required attachments and certifications. The PUCT will not accept attachments and certifications submitted after the deadline. Failure to provide all required information will deem the proposal non-responsive and thus disqualified from consideration.

Proposals must be bound in a three-ring binder.

Proposers must not use the state seal or the PUCT seal in or on the proposal.

Proposals must be free of any extrinsic items.

SECTION 8 – PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Proposals must include the contents outlined below. Mark each section with an index tab.

Within each section, pages must be consecutively numbered. The PUCT may reject a proposal that fails to include required contents.

Statement of the Requirements

Each proposer must state succinctly its understanding of this RFP's requirements and describe how it would perform the tasks in the Statement of Work (Attachment A). Each proposer must show how it keeps abreast of changes in federal and state relay statutes, regulations, and rules. Each proposal must include a work plan of proposed activities and events. Non-incumbent proposers must include proposed initial start-up time, timeline, scope, and tasks. If a proposer believes there are additional tasks or services needed to accomplish the PUCT's goals, identify them, explain why they are needed, and how the proposer would perform them. Each proposer must include all items named in the management component (refer to Attachment A) to be considered a valid proposal.

Competence and Knowledge

Each proposer must demonstrate the competence and knowledge to fulfill the requirements identified in Attachment A. The proposer should also describe any prior experience in providing similar services. The proposer should describe the processes and procedures it intends to use to provide these services and an organizational chart identifying the functions and reporting relationships of the personnel who would be assigned to this work. Each proposer must describe clearly, specifically, and as completely as possible, the technical components used to carry out the requirements of the RFP. The proposal must show the proposer understands the tasks to be performed and identify both potential problems and methods to identify and solve them. Proposals must contain a chart outlining relay call procedure step-by-step as it passes from the point of initiation to the point of completion when either the person called or a machine answers the call.

Qualifications

Proposers **must** have a minimum five years' experience providing the same or similar services. An entity or company in existence for fewer than five years is eligible to submit a proposal if the key personnel on the audit team have the minimum required experience. Proposers who do not meet this requirement are not eligible for award.

For each key personnel a proposer identifies to perform the work described in this RFP, please provide a detailed resume that describes the services they would perform, their qualifications, and their experience.

Financial Capability

Proposers shall describe the financial capability of the person or entity to complete the work required and to sustain its operations. Acceptable evidence of financial capability includes:

- proposer's Annual Report, SEC 10K, and SEC 10Q forms for the last three years;
- investment advisory and rating agency reports issued during the last three years; or
- audited financial statements, including the accompanying notes and the independent auditor's report, for the last three years.

Proposers may provide the above evidence by including hard copies of the information with their proposals or by providing electronic links that provide access to the information as filed

with any agency of the federal government, including the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The PUCT retains sole discretion to determine the adequacy and acceptability of any evidence provided by a proposer.

Please note: The winning proposer will be required to acquire and post either a \$2,000,000.00 performance bond or a \$2,000,000.00 letter of credit to remain active throughout the entire contract. All costs associated with the performance bond or letter of credit is the responsibility of the contractor.

Compensation

Proposers must complete the required pricing sheets located in Attachment B. If a proposer believes that additional work is required to meet the PUCT's goals, identify the additional work and the associated price to accomplish that work.

Please note: The proposed pricing structure must include all anticipated expenses. The PUCT will not reimburse any out-of-pocket expenses.

References

Each proposer must provide at least three references, including contact information. The PUCT prefers references from clients for whom the proposer has performed similar work, including other state utility commissions. Do not use the PUCT or any individuals employed by the Commission as a reference.

Historically Underutilized Business Certification and Required Subcontracting Plan HUB SUBCONTRACTING PLAN (HSP)

In accordance with Gov't Code §2161.252, the contracting agency has determined that subcontracting opportunities are probable under this contract. Therefore, respondents, including State of Texas certified Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBs), must complete and submit a State of Texas HUB Subcontracting Plan (HSP) with their solicitation response if the total dollar amount of bid response is greater than \$100,000, the PUCT requires respondent to complete and submit their signed HUB Subcontracting Plan (HSP) with their solicitation response.

NOTE: Responses that do not include a complete HSP shall be rejected pursuant to Gov't Code §2161.252(b).

Statement on Potential Conflicts of Interest and Prohibited Relationships

Proposers must be neutral and impartial, must not advocate specific positions to the PUCT, and must not have a direct financial interest in the provision of electric or telephone service in the state of Texas. Proposers must identify any personal or business relationships with any electric or telecommunications utility or utility affiliate operating in Texas or any company participating in, or having a pending application at the PUCT to enter, the Texas retail electric market or telecommunications market. Proposers must identify the extent, nature, and time aspects of those relationships. Entities having a conflict of interest, as determined by the PUCT, will not be eligible for contract award.

If a proposer does not have any known or potential conflict of interest, the proposal

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If a proposer does not have any known or potential conflict of interest, the proposal

should include such a statement. Failure to provide either a statement on potential conflicts of interest or a statement that no potential conflicts exist will automatically disqualify the proposer. This statement must be signed before a notary public by the highest-ranking officer of proposer's entity having responsibility for vetting corporate conflicts of interest, e.g. a corporate Executive Vice President rather than the head of an operating or regional unit of the firm.

The PUCT will determine whether a conflict of interest or the perception of a conflict of interest exists from the perspective of a reasonable person uninvolved in the matters covered by the resulting contract. The PUCT is the sole arbiter of whether a conflict or the appearance of a conflict of interests exists. The PUCT encourages proposers to provide complete disclosure of matters that might be considered a conflict of interest. Completeness of disclosure may be a factor in evaluating proposals.

Each proposer also should address how the proposer intends to ensure that no interest arising or potentially arising as a result of its activities or those of its parent, affiliate or other related entity will conflict with proposer's duty should it be selected to provide these services.

Each proposer must identify its lobbyists registered with the Texas Ethics Commission and their compensation and must include a statement of what involvement, if any, the lobbyists will have in connection with (1) this engagement and (2) electric utility or telecommunication utility legislation and policy.

The PUCT may not enter into a contract with a person who has been employed by the PUCT within the past 12 months. Persons who have been employed by the PUCT or by another state agency in Texas more than 12 months but fewer than 24 months before the proposal due date must disclose in the proposal the nature of previous employment with the state agency and the date the employment ended.

Required Certifications

Proposals must contain a statement certifying that the proposer:

- has not given, offered to give, nor intends to give at any time hereafter any economic opportunity, future employment, gift, loan, gratuity, special discount, trip, favor, or service to a public servant in connection with this proposal;
- is not currently delinquent in the payment of any franchise tax owed the State of Texas;
- nor any firm, corporation, partnership, or institution represented by the proposer, or anyone acting for such a firm, corporation or institution has violated the antitrust laws of this state, federal antitrust laws, nor communicated directly or indirectly the bid made to any competitor or any other person engaged in such line of business pursuant to 15 U.S.C. Sec. 1, et seq. and Tex. Bus. & Comm. Code Sec. 15.01, et seq.;
- has not received compensation from the PUCT, or any agent, employee, or person acting on the PUCT's behalf for participation in the preparation of this proposal pursuant to Texas Government Code § 2155.004(a);
- is in compliance with Texas Government Code, § 669.003, relating to contracting with the current or former executive head of a state agency. If the proposer is a current or former executive head of a state agency or employs a current or former head of a state agency, the proposer must provide (1) the executive's name; (2) the name of the state agency; (3) date of separation from the state agency; (4) current position with employer; and (5) date employment

- with proposer began; and
- is not ineligible for contract award under Texas Government Code § 2155.006; and
- acknowledges that any contract may be terminated and payment withheld if this certification is inaccurate.

Other

If incorporated in Texas, proposers must attach to the proposal a current franchise tax Certificate of Good Standing, issued by the Texas State Comptroller's office.

If incorporated in Texas, proposer must also provide to PUCT the corporation's charter number issued by the Texas Secretary of State's office.

Proposer must provide its 9-digit Federal Employer's Identification Number (EIN) or 5-digit State of Texas Vendor's Identification Number (VIN).

SECTION 9 – CONDITIONS

All proposals and copies of proposals become the property of the PUCT upon receipt.

The PUCT reserves the right to amend or cancel this RFP at any time.

Neither the PUCT nor the State of Texas will reimburse any proposer for any costs related to preparing a response to this RFP, including traveling to the mandatory proposers' conference, under any circumstances.

The PUCT reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to cancel the procurement at any time.

The PUCT may request a best and final offer. The PUCT may request an oral presentation or other additional information from one or more proposers.

The PUCT reserves the right to negotiate all or portions of any proposal tentatively selected for award, including the proposed fee.

Proposers understand and agree that no public disclosures or news releases pertaining to this RFP, subsequent contract, or any results or findings based on information provided or obtained to fulfill the requirements of this RFP or subsequent contract shall be made without prior written approval of the PUCT.

Proposers understand that any proposal may be withdrawn in writing before deadline for receipt of proposals. The PUCT will not return withdrawn proposals. Proposers further agree that any proposal that is not withdrawn shall constitute an irrevocable offer for a period of 90 days from the RFP closing date to provide the services set forth in Attachment A, or until the PUCT has made a selection.

Section 2155.077 of the Texas Government Code provides that a vendor may be barred from participating in state contracts that are subject to Subchapter B, General Purchasing Requirements, Procedures, and Programs including contracts for which purchasing authority is delegated to a state agency. If a proposer is barred from participating in state contracts, its proposal shall be disqualified and shall receive no further consideration.

SECTION 10 – SOLE POINT OF CONTACT

This RFP is issued by the Commission, which is the sole point of contact in the State of Texas for issues regarding the RFP.

SECTION 11 – SELECTION CRITERIA

The PUCT will evaluate proposals and make the contract award on the basis of the proposer's demonstrated knowledge, competence, and qualifications to provide the services outlined in Attachment A. The PUCT will evaluate proposals in each of the following categories:

- Experience, skills & qualifications of the proposer and staff (15%);
- Technical Sophistication of Network (15%);
- Management - Required Specifications and Oversight (15%);
- Services Cost - mandatory services (18%);
- Services Cost - mandatory-optional services (17%);
- Service Enhancements and Desirable Services (10%);
- Location of subcontracted labor (10%);
- HUB status or use of HUB subcontractor (Good Faith Effort);
- Financial information of the Company (pass/fail).

SECTION 12 – REVIEW OF PROPOSALS

Each evaluation team member will score each proposal in the categories named above and then turn over the scores to the team leader. In the event that one or more members of the evaluation team requires clarification from a proposer, the relay administrator will submit questions to one or more of the proposers until all needed clarification is received.

The evaluation process consists of the following activities:

1. All items assigned a percentage of the total evaluation are rated by each member of the PUCT review team using the following point system; (1) Poor - Addresses part of minimal requirements, (2) Fair , Addresses most of the minimal requirements, (3) Average Meets minimal requirements (4) Good Advantageous, exceeds some requirements, and (5) Exceptional, exceeds and fully meets all requirements.
2. For each evaluation, the total points awarded in each category will be added together and then multiplied by the assigned category % to derive a total category score.
3. For each evaluation, the category scores received will be added together to derive a total score and ranking that includes the mandatory optional category and a second score and ranking that does not include the mandatory optional score.
4. The team leader will then add up the scores received from the evaluation team members for each proposal and assign rankings with and without the inclusion of the mandatory-optional category. Following the scoring results, at the discretion of the agency oral presentations may be scheduled for all respondents or limited to the top ranked vendors in the competitive range. If scheduled, presentations will be evaluated using the criteria established for the written submitted proposals and taken into consideration in the final recommendation which will be presented to the PUCT's Executive Director.

5. The executive director may (1) approve the recommended selection in whole or in part, (2) disapprove the recommendation, or (3) defer action on the selection. The proposal selected may not necessarily be funded for the full proposal price on mandatory-optional or desirable services if the PUCT decides not to include either or both of these services in the final contract. Upon final award of the contract, the PUCT will notify each proposer in writing of the final action taken.

The PUCT will begin contract negotiations shortly after notification. The PUCT's standard contract terms are found in Attachment C. The successful proposer may offer changes to these terms or additional terms during the negotiation process, but the PUCT may reject them.

SECTION 13 – CONTRACT TERM

If the awardee is the incumbent, the contract start date will be September 1, 2011. If the awardee is not the incumbent, the parties will negotiate a start date that takes into account any necessary start-up time. The contract's initial term expires on August 31, 2016. The contract will include two one-year extensions that will be exercised at the mutual agreement of the PUCT and the TRS provider.

SECTION 14 – TEXAS PUBLIC INFORMATION ACT

Following award of a contract, all proposals are public information and subject to release. Some information in proposals may not be subject to release because it is business or financial information or a trade secret. Proposers are advised to consult legal counsel regarding disclosure issues and to take appropriate precautions to safeguard trade secrets and any other proprietary, including copyrighted, information. If a proposer believes that all or part of its proposal is confidential, then the proposer **MUST** stamp the term "**CONFIDENTIAL**" in bold on the part(s) of the proposal that the proposer believes to be confidential.

If the PUCT receives a request for any information submitted to the PUCT in connection with this RFP, the PUCT will follow the requirements of the Texas Public Information Act (Texas Govt. Code Chapter 552) by notifying proposers and the Office of the Attorney General. The PUCT assumes no obligation for asserting legal arguments on behalf of proposers. The PUCT will release all proposals and parts of proposals that are **not** marked confidential without notifying the proposer.

TRS RFP Glossary

2LVCO: Two-Line Voice Carryover is a form of TRS that enables a VCO user to speak directly to a voice user on one telephone line while another line is used to receive the relay agent's typed responses from the voice user. This allows two-way, uninterrupted conversation however the caller must have two telephone lines one of which must have conference calling or three-way calling capacities.

2LHCO: Two-Line HCO is a form of TRS that enables an HCO user to hear directly from a voice user on one line while another line is used by an HCO user to type text to the relay agent who then voices the typed text to the voice user. This allows two-way, uninterrupted conversation however the caller must have two telephone lines one of which must have conference calling or three-way calling capacities.

711: The abbreviated dialing code for accessing relay services from anywhere in the United States.

Acoustic mode for VCO and HCO: The mode refers to the manner in which a TTY device is connected to the telephone network. For acoustic mode, a regular telephone is used to dial the call, and then the handset is placed on the acoustic couplers of the TTY. (It is important to match the shape of the telephone handset to the shape of the TTY's acoustic couplers to ensure a tight seal and prevent external noise interference.)

ASL: American Sign Language, a visual language based on hand shape, position, movement, and orientation of the hands in relation to each other and the body use.

ANI: Automatic Number Identification, used by 911 systems to identify the calling party and may be used as the callback number.

ASCII: An acronym for **American Standard Code for Information Interexchange**, this type of computer language allows people to use their computers to talk on the phone instead of using a TTY. This requires a modem and special software which employs an eight bit code and can operate at any standard transmission baud rate including 300, 1200, 2400, and higher.

Baudot: A type of communication language applied by some text telephones to communicate with each other.

CA: Communications Agent: Relay operator assisting a relay user during a TRS call.

Call release: A TRS feature that allows the CA to sign-off or be "released" from the telephone line after the CA has set up a telephone call between the originating TTY caller and a called TTY party, such as when a TTY user must go through a TRS facility to contact another TTY user because the called TTY party can only be reached through a voice-only interface, such as a switchboard.

Captel phone: A special phone that has a text screen and when the call has been directed through the captioned telephone service, allows the user to both hear the other party and read the text transcript of the conversation. This device is generally used by persons with a hearing disability but some residual hearing; when used without the captioned telephone service the device functions as a slightly amplified phone.

CTS: Captioned Telephone Service – A form of VCO telephone relay service that allows a person with a Captel phone to both hear the other person and display captions of what the other party in the conversation is saying. There is a "two-line" version of captioned telephone service that offers

additional features, such as call-waiting, *69, call forwarding, and 911 emergency service direct dialing. Unlike traditional TRS (where the CA types what the called party says), the CA repeats or re-voices what the called party says and speech recognition technology automatically transcribes the CA's voice into text, which is then transmitted directly to the user's captioned telephone text display.

Common carrier or carrier: Any common carrier engaged in interstate communication by wire or radio as defined in section 3(h) of the Federal Communications Act of 1934, as amended (the Act), and any common carrier engaged in intrastate communication by wire or radio, notwithstanding sections 2(b) and 221(b) of the Act.

CA: Communications assistant, a person who transliterates or interprets conversation between two or more end users of TRS. CA supersedes the term "TDD operator."

Default Typing Speed for Deaf-Blind 800 number: The proposed system must have a TTY or Telebrailier default buffer typing speed of 15 words per minute when caller uses an 800 number earmarked for deaf-blind or visually impaired persons. The relay agent may type at a normal pace, but the text will come across to the users at a rate of 15 words per minute. Relay Texas service must allow the user to request increased or decreased rates of the text transmission in increments of 5 words per minute.

Desirable service: These are relay service features that the PUC does not require the TRS provider to provide but that in some manner improves relay service provision above and beyond the requirements specified in the Relay Texas RFP.

Direct connect mode for VCO and HCO = This refers to the manner in which a TTY device is connected to the telephone network, in this case, by plugging in the TTY directly to the phone jack in the wall in order to prevent external noise interference and optimize use of special TTY device features.

Existing 8xx Telephone Numbers: The proposed system must use the existing Relay Texas toll-free numbers assigned to VCO, HCO, STS, Reduced Typing Speed, STSVCO, 2LVCO, ASCII, 8xx/9xx Pay-Per-Call, Voice, TTY, and Captioning Telephone VCO telephone calls.

FCC – Federal Communications Commission: The federal organization that regulates all interstate (but not intrastate) communications including communications by radio, TV, wire, satellite, and cable.

Flexibility in Using VCO and HCO: The proposed system must provide VCO and HCO upon request of the relay user if either VCO or HCO 800 numbers are not used by the person placing the call.

Functional equivalence: refers to the manner in which a person with a disability experiences an event as compared to an individual without the disability experiencing the same or a relatively similar event. When functional equivalency exists, the person with the disability experiences the event in a manner which is equal or near equal to that experienced by a person without a disability.

HCO: Hearing Carry-Over is a form of TRS that allows a person with a speech disability to listen to the other end user and, in reply, the CA speaks the text as typed by the person with the speech disability. The CA does not type any conversation. Calls can be made to a hearing party, another HCO, and VCO, STS, ASCII, and TTY users; if the called party uses text communications, the agent will voice them to the HCO user. Two-line HCO is an HCO service that allows TRS users to use one telephone line for hearing and the other for sending TTY messages. HCO-to-TTY allows a relay conversation to take place between an HCO user and a TTY user. HCO-to-HCO allows a relay conversation to take place between two HCO users.

HUBs: Historically Underutilized Businesses

Internet-based telecommunications relay service (TRS/ Internet Protocol) (IP) Relay Service. IP Relay Service: Internet Protocol Relay Service A telecommunications relay service that permits an individual with a hearing or a speech disability to communicate in text using an Internet Protocol-enabled device (such as a computer or other web-enabled device) via the Internet, rather than using a text telephone (TTY) and the public switched telephone network.

IP Relay is an internet text-based form of TRS that uses a computer or other web-enabled device and the Internet, rather than a TTY and traditional telephone lines, for the leg of the call between a person with a hearing or speech disability and the CA. This allows an individual who is using the internet to communicate with another individual via an interconnected voice over Internet Protocol service. Otherwise, the call is generally handled just like a TTY-based TRS call. IP Relay is not required by the FCC, but is offered by several TRS providers.

IP CTS: Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service: A telecommunications relay service that allows a telephone user with an Internet Protocol-enabled device (a computer or other Web-enabled device) to simultaneously listen to the other party and read captions of what the other party is saying via the Internet. IP captioned telephone service, one of the newest forms of TRS, combines elements of captioned telephone service and internet Protocol (IP) Relay Service. IP captioned telephone service can be provided in a variety of ways, but uses the Internet, rather than the telephone network, to provide the link and captions between the caller with a hearing disability and the CA.

Mandatory service – These are required relay service features that the Relay Texas service provider must make available. Proposers must adhere to mandatory service specifications in providing the TRS. The price for all mandatory services must be included in one proposed rate for the contract term.

Mandatory – optional Service – These are relay service features that the Relay Texas service provider must make available unless the proposer clearly explains any exceptions. Any service feature named under this category is not required by law however, the PUCT recognizes the benefit and widespread use of the service feature by current RT customers. The price for mandatory-optional services must be included as a separate price for the contract term from the proposed rate for mandatory services. The PUCT may include the pricing for mandatory-optional services in the contract at its sole discretion.

Exceptions: If a TRS provider plans to deviate from the requirement of any service specifications or is unable to provide mandatory, mandatory-optional, or desirable service specifications, the proposer must clearly identify all such deviations or inabilities in the proposal. If the proposer does not include mandatory, mandatory-optional, or desirable service specifications and gives no explanation for their omission, the PUCT may reject the proposal entirely.

Modes for VCO and HCO: The proposed system must allow VCO and HCO users to utilize both TTY modes, acoustic mode and direct connect mode. The proposed system also must allow VCO relay users to set up a call using voice communication without the TTY transmission that is normally required to set up the relay call.

Non-English language relay service: A telecommunications relay service that allows persons with hearing or speech disabilities who use languages other than English to communicate with voice telephone users in a shared language other than English, through a CA who is fluent in that language.

Numbering Partner: Any entity with whom an Internet-based TRS provider has entered into a commercial arrangement in order to obtain North American Numbering Plan telephone numbers.

PUCT: The Public Utility Commission of Texas

Qualified interpreter: An interpreter who is able to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary.

Reduced/Slow typing speed feature: a TRS feature that transmits words to a TTY or Braille TTY user at the rate of 15 words per minute and allows the transmission rate to be increased or decreased in increments of 5 words per minute, generally used by callers with blindness or severe visual impairment.

Registered Location: The physical location of an end user based on the most recent information, obtained by a VRS or IP Relay provider.

Registered Internet-based TRS User: An individual that has registered with a VRS or IP Relay provider as described in §64.611 of the Public Utility Regulatory Act, Title II, Texas Utilities Code.

Releasing Relay Call - TTY to TTY: The proposed system must allow a call that began as a voice-user to TTY call to become a TTY to TTY call. Note: Once the user releases a relay call, the TRS provider shall not bill the remainder of the call time to the TUSF.

Shared Non-English Language Relay Services - Due to the large number of Spanish speakers in the United States, the FCC requires interstate TRS providers to offer Spanish-to-Spanish traditional TRS. Although Spanish language relay is not required for intrastate (within a state) TRS, many states with large numbers of Spanish speakers offer this service on a voluntary basis. The FCC also allows TRS providers who voluntarily offer other shared non-English language interstate TRS, such as French-to-French, to be compensated from the federal TRS fund.

STS: Speech-to-speech relay service allows individuals with speech disabilities to communicate with voice telephone users through the use of specially trained CAs who understand the speech patterns of persons with speech disabilities and can serve as the caller's "voice" and repeat the words spoken by that person. No special telephone is needed.

STS/VCO: Speech-to-Speech Relay Service for Persons with Hearing Loss and with Speech Understandable by Trained Relay Agents This is a form of relay service for users with hearing loss whose speech may be unintelligible. This service allows users to speak for themselves during a relay call. Relay agents with specialized training and ability in recognizing and relaying the speech of persons with hearing loss are ready to voice for the user if the hearing person does not understand the user's speech. The agent then types the text of the hearing person's communication to the user.

Speed dialing: A TRS feature that allows a TRS user to place a call using a stored number maintained by the TRS facility. In the context of TRS, speed dialing allows a TRS user who has preregistered with the relay provider to give the CA a short-hand name or number for the user's most frequently called telephone numbers.

Switch: A mechanical, electrical or electronic device which opens or closes circuits, completes or breaks an electrical path, or selects paths or circuits. A switch looks at incoming data to determine the destination address and then sets up a transmission path based on the destination address.

TRS: Telephone/Telecommunications relay service(s) is a system that enables an individual with a hearing or speech disability to engage in telephone communication via wire or radio in a manner that is functionally equivalent to an individual who does not have a hearing or speech disability. This term includes services that enable two-way communication between an individual who uses a text telephone or other non-voice terminal device and an individual who may or may not use such a device, speech-to-speech services, video relay services and non-English relay services. TRS supersedes the terms "dual party relay system," "message relay services," and "TDD Relay."

TRS center: The location where CA's handle incoming and outgoing relay calls.

TSP: Telecommunications Service Priority – The FCC system which authorizes and provides special provisions to initiate and restore National Security and Emergency telecommunications services.

TTY: Teletypewriter (also known as TDD, telecommunication device for the deaf) A machine that employs alphanumeric communication in the transmission of coded signals through a wire or radio communication system.

TTY-based TRS (Text-to-Voice)– With this type of “traditional” TRS, a person with a hearing or speech disability uses a special text telephone, called a TTY, to call the CA at the relay center. TTYs have a keyboard and allow people to type their telephone conversations. The text is read on a display screen and/or a paper printout. A TTY user calls a TRS relay center and types the number of the person he or she wishes to call. The CA at the relay center then makes a voice telephone call to the other party to the call, and relays the call back and forth between the parties by speaking what a text user types, and typing what a voice telephone user speaks.

Three-way calling feature: A TRS feature that allows more than two parties to be on the telephone line at the same time with the CA.

TRS Numbering Administrator: The neutral administrator of the TRS Numbering Directory selected based on a competitive bidding process.

TRS Numbering Directory: The database administered by the TRS Numbering Administrator, the purpose of which is to map each Registered Internet-based TRS User's NANP telephone number to his or her end device.

Unique 8xx and 9xx Telephone Numbers for Services: The proposed TRS system must provide a separate 800 for each of these services: TTY, ASCII, VCO, STS, STS/VCO, Captioning Telephone VCO (incoming calls from hearing parties), Spanish, Reduced Typing Speed, and 8xx/9xx Pay-Per-Call.

VRS: Video relay service, an Internet-based form of TRS allows persons whose primary language is American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate with the CA in ASL using video conferencing equipment. The video link allows the CA to view and interpret the party's signed conversation and relay the conversation back and forth with a voice caller. The CA speaks what is signed to the called party, and signs the called party's response back to the caller. VRS is not required by the FCC, but is offered by several TRS providers. VRS allows conversations to flow in near real time and in a faster and more natural manner than text-based TRS. Beginning January 1, 2006, TRS providers that offer VRS must provide it 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and must answer incoming calls within a specific period of time so that VRS users do not have to wait for a long time.

VCO: Voice carry over is a type of TRS that allows a person with a hearing disability, to speak directly to the called party and receive responses in text from the CA. Using VCO and a specially designed telephone with a text screen, a VCO user can speak directly to the other person. As the other person speaks, the CA types back the words that are being said. If the other party is a hearing person, the relay agent will type the hearing person's message to the VCO user. If the other party is a TTY user, he or she can type directly to the VCO user. No typing is required by the calling party and the CA does not voice the conversation. This service is particularly useful to senior citizens who have lost their hearing, but who can still speak. **Two-line VCO** is a VCO service that allows TRS users to use one telephone line for voicing and the other for receiving TTY messages. A **VCO-to-TTY** TRS call allows a relay conversation to take place between a VCO user and a TTY user. **VCO-to-VCO** allows a relay

conversation to take place between two VCO users.

VoIP service: Voice over internet protocol is a type of phone system that uses an internet connection, rather than a traditional phone line, to transmit voice calls.

Spanish Translation: The proposed system must provide both Spanish-only and translation services: Spanish to Spanish, Spanish to English, or English to Spanish.

Telebrailler: a type of TTY that when connected to the telephone network allows the user to receive and send telecommunication information using Braille.

TRS: Telephone Relay (access) Service: A voice/data system that enables communications with individuals who have hearing loss and/or speech loss.

TRS center – Telephone relay service center – the location where all types of relay calls are handled by relay agents

TTY: text telecommunication device used to communicate by or with an individual with severe hearing and or speech impairment who is unable to communicate using a standard telephone.

TTY modes: the manner in which the TTY is connected to the phone line

ATTACHMENT A
STATEMENT OF WORK

I. Management Requirements

Proposers must demonstrate the capability to manage, coordinate, and provide the requested services in a timely manner. Proposals must include all of the following information:

- A. An organizational chart of the company identifying the names of people currently employed in each position and,
- B. A list of the current board members for the company.
- C. Names and resumes of staff member, who will direct, coordinate, monitor, oversee and/or market Relay Texas activities ("account manager").
- D. The TRS account manager must be stationed at a relay center in Texas. The TRS account manager must be responsible for TRS only, including all subcontracted relay services provided by this contract.
- E. A proposer who plans to subcontract with one or more subcontractors must provide the following items in the proposal:
 - 1. A current list of board members for all proposed subcontractors that provide direct services to customers
 - 2. Proposed subcontractor(s)' organizational chart identifying the names of people currently employed in the top six layers of managerial positions;
 - 3. Documents pertaining to demonstration of good faith effort for subcontracting with HUB's. (refer to Attachment E)
 - 4. Specifications of the expected percentage of work to be subcontracted. This should include a description of the type of work to be subcontracted.
 - 5. Evidence of the proposed subcontractor's qualifications;
 - 6. Names, resumes, and description of duties for subcontractor(s)' staff member(s) who will direct, coordinate, monitor, market, and/or provide oversight of Relay Texas activities during the contract.
- F. The TRS center(s) must be located in Texas. However, the TRS Provider may reroute up to twenty (20) percent of the total traffic to its relay center(s) in other states if necessary to meet required average speed answer (ASA). In addition, the TRS Provider may reroute up to 100% of emergency calls to other relay centers, including different TRS relay centers, if necessary.
- G. Captioning Telephone VCO Service, and desirable services do not have to follow the 20% criteria and can be provided from outside of Texas if the proposal clearly shows:
 - 1. the expense of such services;
 - 2. the method used to ensure that these services will be continuously monitored, assessed for quality control, and managed to ensure that each subcontracted service will maintain the same level of quality as other instate services required by the Texas TRS contract;
 - 3. the services are provided more cost effectively from location(s) outside Texas as compared to being located inside of Texas.

When other considerations are equal, the PUCT shall give preference to the TRS provider able to

handle the largest percentage of the overall anticipated Captioning Telephone VCO Service call volume in Texas based on the current monthly average number of billable CTS VCO conversation minutes handled using fiscal year 2010 statistics. See Attachment G

II. SERVICE CATEGORIES

Each service specification is designated as mandatory, mandatory-optional, or desirable. Proposers must comply with the service categories when submitting proposals. See Attachment B for pricing definitions and instructions. All prices must be in conversation minutes.

A. Mandatory

Proposers must adhere to these service categories in providing the TRS, unless proposer clearly explains any exceptions pursuant to the pricing instructions in Attachment B. The PUCT shall be the sole judge of whether such an explanation is satisfactory. The price for all mandatory services must be included in one postalized rate for the entire 5 year contract term

B. Mandatory-Optional

Proposers must offer this service category which consists of only Captioned VCO telephone service, as part of their proposals, and must price the service category separately as noted in the RFP. If proposer is unable to offer this service category, proposer must provide explanation for lack of service provision. Although all proposals must include both mandatory-optional service and mandatory services, the PUCT may accept or decline mandatory-optional service proposals at its sole discretion. The PUCT retains sole discretion whether or not to include this service in the contract or to issue a new RFP for these services.

C. Desirable

These are features that the PUCT does not currently require of the TRS provider and that the PUCT will not require unless mandated by the Texas legislature, the US legislature or the FCC. In the event that any or all of these services become mandated, the PUCT wants to ensure a seamless transition in making these features part of Relay Texas. Proposers shall provide rates for these services as one separate postalized rate for a five-year contract term. The PUCT retains sole discretion whether or not to include these services in the contract or to issue a new RFP for these services if the PUCT determines that the TRS provider's pricing is not competitive.

D. Exceptions. If a TRS provider plans to deviate from the requirement of any service specifications or is unable to provide mandatory, mandatory-optional, or desirable service specifications, the proposer must clearly identify all such deviations or inabilities in the proposal. If the proposer does not include mandatory, mandatory-optional, or desirable service specifications and gives no explanation for their omission, the PUCT may reject the proposal entirely.

E. Additions. The proposer may add an enhancement feature not mentioned in any of these categories.

III. Mandatory Services

A. Availability

The TRS provider shall make the TRS accessible and available for all Texans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Callers shall be able to place calls from their primary location, locations other than their primary location anywhere in the world where telecommunications systems exist and from any locations reachable by wireless services (such as cell telephones) and shall be able to utilize alternative billing arrangements other than those available to individuals with an existing residential or mobile Sprint accounts. Proposers must demonstrate clearly and in detail how they will accomplish this requirement. Internet enabled relay service is not required to meet this standard.

B. Compliance with Existing Regulations

The TRS provider shall provide persons with hearing or speech impairments access to the telecommunications network equivalent to the access provided to other customers. Proposers must demonstrate how they will comply with all federal and state requirements including: PURA, Subchapter D, Section 56.101, the Commission's Substantive Rule §26.414, and 47 C.F.R. Section 64.605 regarding intrastate telecommunications relay service.

C. Complaint Resolution

The TRS provider shall establish procedures regarding complaints, inquiries, and comments about the TRS, TRS subcontractors, and all relay calls contracted through Relay Texas, and all TRS personnel. Proposers must describe their complaint procedure, including how it will be distributed to the PUCT and to the general public and in what format. The procedure must ensure that relay callers who wish to register a complaint are able to reach a supervisor or administrator while connected during a relay call. Proposers must also include safeguards for complainant privacy and confidentiality.

The TRS provider must keep all complaints along with detailed reports specifying the manner in which the contractor responded to the complaint and whether the complaint was resolved. The contractor shall submit this report monthly and submit an annual report to the PUCT containing all information required by the FCC including the MARS report, complaint log report, and others as required by the FCC.

D. Technical Specifications

1. **Switching System:** The switching system must ensure that no calls are dropped due to technical failure on the part of the TRS provider. Proposers must demonstrate that their switching system is capable of undergoing preventive maintenance while the system is in operation.
2. **Network Configuration:** The TRS provider's transmission circuits shall meet or exceed industry interexchange performance standards as identified by the ANSI T1.506-1990, Network Performance – Transmission Specifications for Switched Exchange Access Network standards for circuit loss and noise. Proposers must describe the facilities, telecommunications equipment, and software the proposer will use in providing TRS, including all subcontracted work that comprises over 25% of the conversation minutes of the billable relay services being provided. Proposals must include a network design diagram that describes the network configuration to be used. This segment of the proposal must describe how callers will access the service and how the proposer would handle the calls.
3. **Service Expansion:** The TRS provider must be capable of expanding the service in response to increasing demand. Proposers must describe how they would meet this requirement and must identify predicted trends likely to increase the demand for relay services during the contract period. TRS shall maintain, throughout the contract term, all telephone relay performance standards specified in the Request for Proposals.
4. **Technology Innovation:** Proposers must describe how they plan to use changes and improvements in telecommunications technology to improve relay service.

5. **Uninterruptible Power System:** The relay center(s) must have a back-up system sufficient to allow the center(s) to operate for a minimum of 12 hours after a power failure. Re-routing to other centers in an emergency situation is acceptable and encouraged, but does not replace the back-up system.
6. **Disaster Recovery Plan:** Proposals must include a complete business recovery plan to recover and restore relay service in the event of a disaster that shuts down relay service. The TRS provider will notify the Relay Texas Administrator of any disruption in service that lasts more than 30 minutes. The TRS provider will provide such notification within three hours of the time the disruption begins or by 8:30 a.m. on the next business day if the disruption occurs outside normal business hours, which are defined as being from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Central Time, Mondays through Fridays. In its notification of service disruption, the TRS provider shall explain how the problem will be corrected and give an approximate time and date when relay service will be in full operation. Additionally, after the service is back in full operation, the TRS Provider shall submit a written report on the problem and resolution to the Relay Texas Administrator. Note: If ASA is over 3.3 seconds due to disasters beyond control of TRS Provider and the TRS Provider requests that the penalty fee be waived, then the TRS Provider needs to submit to the Relay Texas Administrator the request for waiver within 30 days of the occurrence. Proposers must also include a statement reflecting an agreement to enroll in the FCC's Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP) program and show a plan of action relating to how the proposer will continue to operate telephone relay services in the event of terrorist acts.

E. STANDARD SERVICE SPECIFICATIONS

1. **Local and Intrastate Toll Calls:** The proposed relay service must provide local and intrastate toll calls by wire or radio.
2. **Interstate Toll Calls:** Proposers must provide interstate relay service. Funding for interstate service will come from the interstate jurisdiction as mandated by the Federal Communications Commission.
3. **Billing Requirements:** Proposers must describe their proposed automated billing systems, including the following requirements:
 - a. the capability to charge relay users for collect calls, person-to-person calls, and calls charged to a third party;
 - b. the capability to bill any Texas local exchange company calling card and any non-proprietary interexchange company calling card;
 - c. billing must originate in the geographic locality where the caller is situated and end in the geographic locality of the called party; and
 - d. a complete description of how the proposer will bill relay users for all calls, including procedures for obtaining information from the local exchange companies, whether the billing will be performed in-house or sub-contracted, and a sample bill.
4. **7-1-1 Service:** The TRS must be accessible by dialing 7-1-1. The TRS provider will utilize a Voice Response Unit (VRU) to answer 7-1-1 dialed calls. The VRU will answer with a brief voice interactive menu to give hearing persons an opportunity to press a button to connect to a relay agent to make a voice call. If there is no selection detected, the call will automatically transfer to TTY mode. The TRS Provider will use automatic number identification (ANI) to brand the calls based on the device used for future relay calls from the same ANI. The User Database configured by relay user (including hearing persons) will override ANI branding. The TRS Provider shall then reroute 7-1-1 calls to the relay user's preferred 8xx number (such as VCO, TTY, STS, etc). The TRS provider shall continue to provide 8XX relay. The TRS provider will provide a monthly report showing how many relay calls are initiated by 7-1-1 and 8XX users.
5. **Automatic Branding:** Proposers must include automatic branding as follows:

- a. when a relay user calls Relay Texas through 711, automatic number identification (ANI) will automatically brand the telephone number to 711 for future use;
 - b. the next time a relay user uses the same telephone number, the ANI will automatically provide the requested type of call; and,
 - c. if the relay user uses a different type of call, then ANI will brand the telephone number with the new type of call for future use.
6. User Database and Relay User Input. To assist in making relay calls more efficient, proposers must provide for a database of users' call preferences such as type of call, billing information, speed dialing, slow typing, carrier of choice, etc. This information once provided by the relay user must appear on the agent screen when a user calls the relay center from the registered ANI. Relay users must be able to provide their database information to the relay provider via mail, fax, and internet. **Note:** If a relay user states a preference for a type of call, such as American Standard Code Information Interchange (ASCII), Voice Carryover (VCO), Speech-To-Speech (STS), etc. this preference will override the automatic branding. A different relay user may use the telephone number with permanent branding, but must be able to ask for a different type of call. The permanent branding remains effective until the relay user specifically requests that the TRS provider's agent change the user's preference in the database.
7. Usage. Each proposer must certify that the proposer will not place restrictions on the length or number of calls placed by customers through the TRS, even during peak times.
8. Access to Automated System. Proposed services must allow users (including but not limited to TTY, VCO, ASCII, Hearing-Carryover (HCO and STS)) to call services in order to send messages. These services can include paging services, voice menus, answering machines, or any other automated system that either records or passes on a voice, text, or electronic messages to the other party.
9. Courtesy and Intercept Messages. Each proposal must provide that after five rings a courtesy message will inform callers that they have reached Relay Texas or, when applicable, the Captioned Telephone service provider. An example of a courtesy message would be "Welcome to Relay Texas. An agent will be with you shortly." Appropriate intercept messages shall also be provided if there is a system failure or if all relay stations continue to be busy. This message will occur no longer than 30 seconds after the courtesy message has been invoked and may be repeated. **Note:** An intercept message with a customer waiting on the line shall not constitute an answer. Accordingly, the TRS provider shall not bill the time in queue to the TUSF Busy signals are not allowed, unless related to equipment failure of a third party.
10. Carrier of Choice (COC). The proposed service must allow the relay user to choose his or her preferred interexchange carrier (IXC) when placing toll calls through TRS. The relay agent is not required to offer the option, but must describe the option when asked by a relay user. An explanation of COC must be included in all appropriate relay publications. The TRS provider must maintain a list of participating long distance carriers and share it publicly.
11. Text and Voice Calls. Each proposer must design its system so that the TRS shall be capable of receiving and transmitting voice and text calls that may involve electronic signals, including but not limited to Baudot code and ASCII standards.
12. Type of Transmission. The TRS shall be able to process relay calls made by digital and analog transmissions, including calls placed using enhanced speed options such as turbocode and dial-through technology as developed by TTY manufacturers, during the contract period. Proposers must specify the type of enhanced speed, if any, to be used in the TRS platform.
13. Charges for Local Calls. In compliance with the PUCT's Substantive Rule §26.414 (b)(3)(A), local exchange carriers shall not impose access charges on calls made through the TRS which originate and terminate within the same toll-free local calling scope.

14. Extended Area Service (EAS). Each proposer must describe its system that ensures that relay users are not billed for toll usage when completing EAS calls, including calls made by or to subscribers of optional EAS. Proposals must describe the method that will be used to implement this requirement and indicate the frequency of update of the EAS database.
15. Charges for Intrastate Toll. Proposers must provide a copy of the intrastate toll rates that will be billed to relay users.
16. Answering Machine and Voice Mail Procedure: The TRS provider shall use the following minimum procedures for processing relay calls that reach an answering machine or voice mail.
 - a. The relay agent will inform the caller when an answering machine or voice mail has been reached. In the event a captioned VCO telephone service provider is handling the call, the captioned VCO telephone service agent will inform the caller when an answering machine or voice mail has been reached will inform the caller when an answering machine or voice mail has been reached.
 - b. When the relay caller is a text user and the answering machine message is long, the agent will record the message, and convey it to the relay user in its entirety.
 - c. The relay agent will relay the complete outgoing message verbatim including the option for the relay caller to leave a message if stated on the outgoing message.
 - d. The relay agent will leave the relay caller's message (voice or text).
 - e. The relay agent will confirm to the caller that the message has been left.
 - f. The relay caller will be charged for only one call (the first_call) regardless of the number of calls that may be required to retrieve and convey the answering machine message and/or to leave a message.
17. Recording Answer Machine or Voice Mail: If the caller reaches an answering machine or voice mail, the proposed system must allow the relay agent to record a voice announcement and relay the message to the caller without having to call back each time to get the entire message. The proposed system must provide for deletion of the recorded message once the relay call is completed.
18. Voice Menus Procedure: The proposed system must allow relay agents to convey voice menus to the relay user quickly in order to process the relay call as quickly as possible. The TRS provider will charge the relay caller for only one call (the first call) regardless of the number of calls that may be required to retrieve and convey the voice menu message.
19. One-Line Answering Machine or Voice Mail Retrieval: The proposed system must allow a relay user to call Relay Texas to retrieve voice messages from answering machines or voice mail without connecting to the third party. The proposed system must allow the relay agent to record messages from answering machines or voice mail and then relay the message to the caller. The proposed system must provide for deletion of the recorded message once the relay call is completed.
20. Number Verification and Identification of Calls. The proposed system must provide a text relay user with the number dialed and identify the type (local, long distance, toll free) of call made. This will help users know if a number has been misdialled and be aware whether the call is local, long distance, or toll free.
21. Access to 9xx and 8xx Pay-Per-Call Services: The proposed system must allow access to and end user billing for 9xx and 8xx number pay-per-calls. The proposal must identify how the system will determine if the end user's phone number is blocked from making such calls. The 50% discount rates for intrastate relay calls do not apply to these calls.
22. Access to Restricted 8xx Numbers: The proposed system must allow access to regionally restricted 8xx numbers by local relay users in cities or towns where relay centers are outside these regions.
23. Directory Assistance: The proposed system will allow users to access local and long distance directory assistance through the TRS. Local directory assistance calls must be billed to end users at the same rates (or less) that are billed by the local company serving the end user. Long distance directory assistance calls must be billed at the proposer's

tariffed rate or at the tariffed rate of the carrier used for the long distance directory and only conversation minutes used in the call will be compensated.

24. **Emergency Calls:** The proposed system must include appropriate procedures for handling emergency calls in the shortest possible time. Proposers must offer a system for incoming emergency calls that, at a minimum, automatically and immediately transfers the caller to an appropriate Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). An appropriate PSAP is either a PSAP that the caller would have reached if he had dialed 911 directly, or a PSAP that is capable of enabling the dispatch of emergency services to the caller in an expeditious manner. Proposers must explain any exception to a fully electronic transfer of emergency calls. In fiscal year 2010 Relay Texas processed a total of 176 emergency calls and an average of 14.7 emergency calls per month.
25. **Blockage Rate: Mandatory:** The proposed system must not allow a caller to receive a busy signal. The proposed system must utilize a queue service when a busy signal is detected, unless it is related to an equipment failure of a third party.
26. **Average Answer Time:** Proposed average speed of answer (ASA) times shall not exceed 3.3 seconds in a single 24-hour period. This includes special services such as STS, STS/VCO, Captioning Telephone VCO, etc. The TRS provider shall measure by sampling the ASA a minimum of once every 30 minutes for each 24-hour period. ASA shall be measured from the time the call hits the first measurable switch point to the point at which a relay agent is dedicated to the call. An answer shall mean that the relay agent is ready to render assistance and/or ready to accept information necessary to process the call.
27. **Caller-ID:** The proposed system must display a caller's telephone number on the called party's Caller ID. Proposers shall describe how they will provide this feature. Caller ID options, such as blocking or anonymous call rejection must be provided.
28. **ASCII Split Screen:** The proposed system must provide a "split-screen" for relay agents handling ASCII calls upon a caller's request.

F. SERVICE SPECIFICATIONS

Proposers must address each of the following service specifications in their proposals, describing the functionality they will provide in each category and providing enough detail to allow technical reviewers to understand precisely how the proposed system will provide the following services.

1. Voice Carryover (VCO)
2. Two-Line VCO (2LVCO)
3. Hearing Carryover (HCO)
4. Two-Line HCO (2LHCO)
5. Modes for VCO and HCO
6. The proposed system must allow VCO and HCO users to utilize both TTY modes: acoustic mode and direct connect mode. The proposed system also must allow VCO relay users to set up a call using voice communication without the TTY transmission that is normally required to set up the relay call.
7. **Flexibility in Using VCO and HCO:** The proposed system must provide VCO and HCO upon request of the relay user if either VCO or HCO 800 numbers are not used by the person placing the call.
8. **Releasing Relay Call - TTY to TTY:** The proposed system must allow a call that began as a voice-user to TTY call to become a TTY to TTY call. Note: Once the user releases a relay call, the TRS provider shall not bill the remainder of the call time to the TUSF.
9. **Speech-To-Speech Relay Service for Speech Disabled (STS)**
10. **Speech-to-Speech Relay Service for Persons with Hearing Loss with Speech Understandable by Trained Relay Agents (STS/VCO)**
11. **Slow Typing for Deaf-Blind and Visually Impaired Users:** Agents shall type at a slower speed for Deaf-Blind and Visually Impaired relay users. The agent must maintain the typing speed throughout the call, in order to maintain efficiency.

12. Default Typing Speed for Deaf-Blind 800 number: The proposed system must have a default buffer typing speed of 15 words per minute when a caller uses an 800 number for deaf-blind or visually impaired persons. The relay agent may type at a normal pace, but the text will come across to the users at a rate of 15 words per minute. This service must allow the user to request increased or decreased rates of the transmission of text in increments of 5 words per minute.
13. Spanish Translation: The proposed system must provide both Spanish-only and translation services: Spanish to Spanish, Spanish to English, or English to Spanish.
14. Unique 8xx and 9xx Telephone Numbers for Services: The proposed system must provide a separate 800 for each of these services: TTY, ASCII, VCO, STS, STS/VCO, Captioning Telephone VCO (incoming calls from hearing parties), Spanish, Reduced Typing Speed, and 8xx/9xx Pay-Per-Call.
15. Existing 8xx Telephone Numbers: The proposed system will use existing Relay Texas 8xx numbers for VCO, HCO, STS, Reduced Typing Speed, STSVCO, 2LVCO, ASCII, 8xx/9xx Pay-Per-Call, Voice, TTY, and Captioning Telephone VCO.

G. RELAY AGENT SPECIFICATIONS

Each proposer must address the following agent specifications in their proposals, describing how it will fulfill the requirements of each category with enough detail to allow technical reviewers to understand precisely how the proposer plans to staff relay services.

1. Identification of Relay Agent – Gender and Number: Each relay agent who processes Relay Texas calls, TRS, and captioned telephone VCO service will be assigned an identification number. When answering a relay call, the relay agent will answer with his or her number and gender identification such as: “RTX 105M”. The relay caller must be able to request an agent of a specific gender.
2. Confidentiality: TRS must be provided in a manner that ensures confidentiality regarding existence and content of conversation as required by applicable laws. The TRS Provider must outline disciplinary and/or termination procedures in writing if relay agents violate confidentiality laws. Attachment F is a copy of a Chapter 82, Texas Human Resources Chapter 82 (as amended) Legislature, containing confidentiality requirements for relay agents and interpreters.
3. Relay Agent Training: TRS Relay agent training must include instruction on proper translation/interpretation of typed ASL (ASL gloss and ASL grammar), information about deaf culture, and information about the needs of hard-of-hearing, speech-disabled, and deaf-blind users. Training will involve simulated call handling. Appropriate parts of agent training shall be provided by persons from the deaf, hard-of-hearing, speech-disabled, and deaf-blind communities with expertise in the field of language interpreting, ASL. A minimum of three days (24 hours) of training should be focused on understanding basic American Sign Language. A minimum of up to three months of probation should be given for relay agents to show a basic understanding of written ASL gloss.
4. Relay Agent Counseling: The proposal shall outline counseling and support programs to assist TRS and CTS VCO relay agents in dealing with the emotional aspects of relaying calls. The programs must maintain confidentiality as required above.
5. Procedures for Relaying Communication: All relay agents must convey the full content, context, and intent of the relayed communication style being translated Throughout the phone call, relay agents must strive to maintain functional equivalency to a standard (non-TRS) phone call. All secondary activities that would normally be known to a hearing person engaged in a telephone conversation must be relayed whenever possible. Unless the relay user requests otherwise, the agent shall relay all calls according to the following procedures:
 - a. Circumstances under which a relay agent explains the relay service: When a non-text user *receives* a relay call, the TRS relay agent will ask whether he or she has

previously used TRS. If such user has used TRS before, the call will be processed without further delay. If not, the relay agent will explain how the service operates and will notify the text relay user, using parentheses, that TRS is being explained. The TRS explanation will be brief and concise. A suggested format is: "The person who is calling you is either deaf or speech-disabled. The caller is typing a conversation, which will be read to you. When you hear the words "Go Ahead," it will be your turn to speak. Please speak directly to the caller. Everything that is heard will be typed to them. One moment for your call to begin." When a non-text relay user *initiates* a call to Relay Texas, the relay agent will **NOT** ask whether he or she has previously used TRS unless it is obvious to the relay agent that the relay user does not know how to use TRS. If proposers have another explanation other than above suggestion, please note the explanations in the proposal. If there is more than one explanation to meet specific features of TRS callers (made from VCO, HCO, or other TRS features, please note them as well.

- b. The originating relay user retains full control of the call: The caller shall have the option of telling the relay agent what aspects of the call she or he will handle. For example, a text relay caller may request that he or she introduce relay services to the called party, rather letting the relay agent do the introduction.
- c. Relay agents shall maintain a neutral position: Relay agents shall not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions or additional information during a relay call, even if the relay communication breaks down. An exception to this occurs when either the relay caller or called party requests assistance from a relay agent or during an emergency call. Even then, a neutral position must be maintained to the extent possible. Relay agents shall not offer any advice based on personal judgments regarding the content of any relay communication (i.e., "Don't do what he is asking you to do" or "he's trying to rip you off"). Relay agents shall not have a personal conversation with anyone who calls the TRS at any time, except to extend a polite and concise response when prompted, such as "thank you" if a relay user comments on a job well done.
- d. Relay agents shall keep both parties informed on the status of the relay call: This information includes, but is not limited to, an indication of such signals as dialing, ringing, busy, disconnected, recording, fax sound, or holding. Captioned telephone VCO relay agents shall keep CTS VCO users informed regarding the status of a call, including but not limited to an indication of such signals as dialing, ringing, busy, disconnected, recording, fax sound, or holding.
- e. To the extent possible, the relay agent shall identify to the text and CTS VCO relay user whether the hearing or voice user is female or male by using parentheses at the beginning of a call as follows: "(M)" or "(F)".
- f. All comments directed to either party by the relay agent shall be relayed to the other party. For example, if the relay agent asks a hearing party, "Will you accept a collect call?" these words will be relayed to the text and CTS VCO relay user in parentheses. Likewise, all comments directed to the relay agent by either party shall be relayed. For example, if a text relay user types, "Yes, I will accept the charges," these words will be relayed to the other relay party as "(The party says, 'Yes, I will accept the charges.')."
- g. Relay agents shall, to the best of their abilities, convey to the text and CTS VCO relay user the voice relay user's tone of voice. Whenever possible, characterizing of tone of voice will first be conveyed with descriptive words such as "yelling," "crying," "loud," "quiet," or "foreign accent." These words shall be in parenthesis. If it is clear to the relay agent that the tone of voice is more emotional than the descriptive sound words can provide, then relay agent can type something such as "(sounds angry)" in addition to the descriptive sound words if it makes conversation clearer. Such descriptions and other similar utterances shall be in

parenthesis, preceded by the word “sounds.” Relay agents may also be creative in the ways that they may convey the hearing person’s vocalizations to the text user. If the voice Relay User “groans” or “hums” these could be relayed as “ooohh” or “hmmm.” An excited “yes” may be relayed as “yesss!!!”. The TRS and CTS VCO Provider shall provide training in voice tone conveyances as part of the overall agent training.

- h. When the relay agent verbalizes for the text relay user, the agent shall adopt a conversational tone of voice appropriate to the type of call being made. If a text user types an expression (for example “oooh”) the relay agent shall verbalize accordingly.
- i. The relay agent will identify background noise (e.g. “baby crying,” “music,” and “coughing”) to the text and CTS VCO relay user whenever possible.
- j. There shall be no censorship or omission by relay agents in any situation. Relay agents must convey everything, including profanity, to the other party.

H. Relay Agent Skills and Proficiency

The TRS provider shall ensure that no relay agent who, within the training period, lacks the skills listed in the following subsections shall be used as a relay agent, with a few exceptions as noted.

1. Relay agents must possess 12th grade level spelling skills. The TRS provider shall appropriately test applicants to determine grade level spelling skill. The Relay Texas Administrator may request that the TRS provider submit reports on relay agent spelling skills and the TRS provider shall comply within a reasonable period of time not to exceed 30 days.
2. TRS relay agents must be able to type at a speed of 60 words per minute (wpm) for five minutes by the first day of actual relay agent work. These relay agents must be tested every six months to ensure that the 60-wpm for five minutes standard (voice to text) is maintained. These periodic tests shall simulate actual working conditions and must not be standard typing tests. Tests should be modified with sufficient frequency to ensure that relay agents cannot “learn” the test. The Relay Texas Administrator may request that the TRS provider submit reports on relay agent spelling skills and typing speed scoring, and the TRS provider shall comply within a reasonable period of time not to exceed 30 days.
3. The relay agent’s speech must be clear and easily understood by hearing relay users.
4. In order to assist in clearer understanding between the two parties, relay agents must translate the typed languages of relay users whose primary language may be ASL or whose written English language skills are limited to grammatically correct conversational English. If text users instruct the relay agent to type verbatim, agents shall follow such instructions.
5. During all shifts, TRS relay agents fluent in Spanish must be available to provide translation when one or both relay users communicate in Spanish. Most Spanish speakers in Texas are familiar with the Spanish spoken in Mexico. Therefore, if proposers plan to use Spanish-speaking agents whose linguistic origins are not Mexican, they must explain how they will train agents to address issues of accent, idiom, and other language characteristics so that their speech will be understandable by Spanish-speaking Texas Relay users and so that they will accurately relay communications by Spanish-speaking Texas Relay users.

I. TRS and CapTel audits

1. The contractor will be responsible for engaging an independent auditor to conduct the audits specified below. The audits must be completed within 90 calendar days after the fiscal year has ended (August 31st). The contractor must receive the Relay Administrator’s

written approval of the audit firm and of the proposed scope of work before the audit begins.

Year One, Three, and Five

The contractor will engage an independent auditor to conduct a SASE 16 Type II audit on administrative and operational procedures for the fiscal years ending August 31, 2012; August 31, 2014; and August 31, 2016.

Year One, Two and Four

The contractor will engage an independent auditor to conduct quality assurance audits on all aspects of relay service delivery covered by the contract to determine whether the expected level of service is being met. The scope of these audits will include, but is not limited to, the following performance criteria:

- Typing speed/captioning speed
 - Typing accuracy/captioning accuracy –
 - Average accuracy with and without corrections
 - Reason for errors
 - Average Connect time
 - Conversation minute length
2. The cost of these audits will be billed as a separate line item on the relay service invoice and will be paid from USF funds. Upon completion of each audit, the contractor will provide the auditor's written report with management response to the PUCT. The written report must include all processes and procedures that were examined and the results of the examination.

IV. MANDATORY-OPTIONAL

16. Captioning Telephone VCO Service: This is an interactive captioning service that allows the user to both hear the other party's voice and read the text transcript of the call. The user dials the called party's telephone number using a captioning telephone and is automatically connected to the captioning service. A specially trained agent at the service transcribes everything the other party says, which appears as text on the captioning telephone.
17. Spanish Captioning VCO Service: This is an interactive captioning service that allows the user to both hear the other party's Spanish speaking voice and read the Spanish text transcript of the call. The user dials the called party's telephone number using a captioning telephone and is automatically connected to the captioning service. A specially trained agent at the service transcribes everything the other Spanish speaking party says, which appears as Spanish text on the captioning telephone.

V. DESIRABLE

- A. Voice User Calling Direct to Captioning Telephone VCO User: The calling procedure is set up so that a Captioning VCO user is able to receive a call directly from the voice user instead of voice user using an 800 number. It may involve 2 line system, dialing 7-1-1, or other technological alternatives.
- B. Internet Relay: Internet Relay uses the Internet instead of the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) telephone system to connect to a relay operator. Internet Relay functions the same as TRS except for those items that use PSTN tools for a variety of items. Currently, the FCC funds Internet Relay Services fully from the Interstate TRS Fund. It is possible that the FCC may pass the costs for providing at least part of these services to states for local and intrastate Internet Relay calls. In anticipation of this possibility, the PUCT is requesting that proposers provide a price per minute for Internet-enabled relay service.